



The President's Daily Brief

~~Top Secret~~ 21 September 1968



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THE PRESIDENT'S
DAILY BRIEF
21 SEPTEMBER 1968

1. Soviet Union -
Eastern Europe

The Warsaw Pact commander, Soviet Marshal Yakubovsky, arrived in Sofia Thursday ostensibly to discuss the strengthening of the pact with Bulgarian officials. The visit will probably cause nail-biting in Rumania, Yugoslavia, and even in Austria, but there is no evidence that the Soviets are about to take any military action.

The Rumanians may, however, come under greater pressure in the near future to fulfill their obligations under the Warsaw Pact, perhaps even to permit joint maneuvers to take place on their territory.

Meanwhile, the Soviet propaganda machine keeps grinding away at Berlin and West Germany.

2. Czechoslovakia -
Soviet Union

There are signs of growing disagreement over how to carry out the Moscow accord. Dubcek and his colleagues are said to be resisting the removal of a number of Czech officials. The Czechs in fact have counterbalanced "resignations" of liberals by ousting conservatives favored by Moscow.

Prague has also announced the "temporary" postponement of some economic reforms attacked in the Soviet press--language which obviously will not please Moscow. Prague is also saying that nonparty people will share in the management of "social, economic, and other processes." This is clear defiance of Soviet insistence that the party increase its control.

3. Congo (Brazzaville)

Chances of early military intervention by Kinshasa have faded. Mobutu

is junketing around various North African capitals and seems to have lost his opportunity. Brazzaville's new leader, Ngouabi, appears to be consolidating his power position handily.

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4. Philippines

Manila's yellow press is whipping up anti-US sentiment, claiming the US has sided with Malaysia in the Sabah dispute. Several senators and congressmen have joined the assault. One has gone so far as to demand withdrawal of American bases, and demonstrators appeared at the American Embassy yesterday.

There is more smoke than fire in this. The Sabah issue, however, has touched a sensitive nationalistic nerve, and various elements on the Manila scene will try to manipulate it for their own ends.

5. Honduras

The labor movement, which had been bickering quietly with the government for six months, suddenly called a general strike Thursday. The government in response has declared a state of siege. As long as the army stands behind the government, the strikers have little chance of accomplishing very much, but President Lopez may order harsh measures which could furnish his opponents with martyrs and a new unity.

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FOR THE PRESIDENT'S EYES ONLY

- 1.) Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
- 2.) North Vietnamese Reflections of U S
Political Attitudes



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Special Daily Report on North Vietnam
for the President's Eyes Only

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I. NOTES ON THE SITUATION

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Living Conditions: Notes made by a member of an infiltrating North Vietnamese unit describe severe privation in the provinces of southern North Vietnam through which he passed. According to the writer, the people he observed south of the 19th Parallel suffered acute shortages of food and clothing; women were dressed in rags, and children begged food from the North Vietnamese troops. The writer said the cost of living in the southern provinces was four times higher than that above the 19th Parallel. Agricultural workers, he wrote, earned only about 27 pounds of manioc and corn a month, and lack of manpower left many rice fields uncultivated.

Conditions in the North Vietnamese provinces still subject to bombing are undoubtedly severe. The government has probably evacuated a considerable number of the residents, contributing perhaps to the "lack of manpower" described in the notes, and to the hardships of those remaining.

The writer's bleak observations may also have been influenced by his own deteriorating morale. The notes disclose that his infiltration unit lost

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more than 60 percent of its original complement to desertions and sickness during the march south. This figure, of course, is most unusually high. Normally, desertions and sickness account for about 10 to 20 percent.

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II. NORTH VIETNAMESE REFLECTIONS OF US POLITICAL ATTITUDES ON THE WAR

More on the US Campaign: In its latest commentary on the US presidential race, Radio Hanoi's domestic service on 18 September restated its contempt for all three major candidates and arrived at its standard conclusion: "They are all alike." The broadcast claimed that all candidates agree on continuing the "aggression against Vietnam," and all "demand reciprocity." It threatened "even heavier blows" by the Vietnamese people if the new president fails to meet Hanoi's demands.

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